

H2E = Hospitals for a Healthy Environment

Mercury is a naturally occurring metal which has several forms; Exposure to mercury occurs from breathing contaminated air, ingesting food (especially fish), and having dental or medical treatments. Mercury was listed as number three on the list of hazardous substances at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. It is a neurotoxin and at high levels, may damage the brain, kidneys and developing fetus.

Mercury is found in thermometers, blood pressure devices, lab chemicals, cleaners, and other products used in health care. Fortunately, there are safe, cost effective non-mercury alternatives for nearly all of these uses.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the American Hospital Association formed Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E) in 1998. The American Nurses Association and Health Care without Harm have joined in this national H2E partnership. The primary goal of H2E is to educate health care professionals about pollution prevention opportunities in hospitals and health care systems. The three main objectives of H2E are to:

1. Eliminate mercury containing waste from health care facilities by 2005,
2. Reduce the overall volume of waste (both regulated and non-regulated) by 33% by 2005 and 50% by 2010, and
3. Identify hazardous substances for pollution prevention and waste reduction opportunities, including hazardous chemicals and persistent, bio-accumulative, and toxic pollutants.

Dr. Mike Vogel, Montana State University Extension Environmental and Health Specialist, wrote and received an EPA grant to establish an H2E partnership in Montana. The first step taken in the Montana H2E Partnership was to call "possible partners" and get their input. Contacts included: Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Hospital Association, Montana Health Network, MSU School of Nursing, Montana Office of Rural Health, and Indian Health Services. They were asked these questions: 1. who should be involved, 2. what is currently being done and 3. What can MSU Extension do to help hospitals in Montana?

To kick off the Montana Initiative, a teleconference was held in December 2005 on H2E and the mercury issue. Nancy Larson from the Pollution Prevention Institute in Wichita, Kansas shared how she got an H2E program up and going in her rural state with the hospital engineers group. Matthew Langenfield, from Region 8 EPA educated the partners about mercury and encouraged Region 8 to work on this issue. Cecilia Deloach from the national H2E office gave support and encouraged us to use the national website www.h2e-online.org and the resources H2E has to offer.

An H2E Summit (workshop) was held in January 2006 in Bozeman, Montana. Here partners were able to watch "Our Waste, Our Responsibility" a video about mercury and learn what Vermont did to reduce waste in hospitals. Teresa Henry, a Missoula legislator and MSU Nursing Professor talked about the mercury legislation that had been introduced in the Montana Legislature. The Summit meeting allowed the Montana H2E partners to share and talk face-to-face about mercury in hospitals. At this meeting, MSU Extension met and got support from the Montana H2E partners to continue the project. The Barrett hospital at Dillon was already a H2E member and helped us locate the Montana Society of Hospital Engineers. At the summit, a decision was made to survey all of the Montana hospitals to find out what they already knew and were doing about mercury and waste. The Montana Hospital Association agreed to provide a list of Montana hospitals, complete with phone numbers and a contact names.

With input from the H2E partners, MSU Extension came up with a twelve question "mercury survey". The mercury survey was done via telephone by Diann Pommer, MSU Extension Agent. MSU Extension would like to thank the Montana Hospital Association for providing the contact names and phone numbers. Diann was able to get a response from all the Montana hospitals and healthcare facilities on the list. *Please see attached survey results.*

An H2E presentation was done for the Montana Society of Hospital Engineers



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state convention in Billings. We are excited to be able to use the national H2E display and handout the results from the mercury survey done in Montana.

Thank you **Montana H2E Partners** for partnering with MSU Extension.

Montana Hospital Association	Montana Society of Hospital Engineers
Montana Health Network	MSU College of Nursing
Department of Environmental Quality	Barrett Hospital - Dillon
Department of Public Health & Human Services	
Billings Area Indian Health Services	Montana Office of Rural Health
Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital - Glasgow	
Sure-Way Recycling	Bozeman Deaconess Hospital
Malmstrom Air Force Base	VA Hospital in Fort Harrison

MSU Extension would like to thank all the H2E partners, the 83 Montana hospitals and health care facilities who have completed the mercury survey and all the others who are and have helped move the mercury issue forward in Montana. The Montana H2E partnership initiative shows that much can be accomplished when agencies and organizations work together on an issue or project.

Mercury Survey of Montana hospitals & health care institutions
MSU Extension – April - July 2006

	Yes	No	Want more information
1. Are you aware of the American Hospital Association's voluntary plan to eliminate mercury waste from hospitals by 2005?	41	36	2
2. Does your facility work to reduce or eliminate mercury?	52	21	4
3. Do you have mercury spill clean-up procedures?	52	21	1
4. Do you have an "environmentally friendly" disposal procedure for mercury?	44	28	4
5. Has your facility conducted an inventory of mercury containing devices and unwanted chemicals?	36	36	10
6. Has your facility replaced mercury containing devices or equipment with mercury free? (examples: thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, sphygmomanometers)	73	4	3
7. Has your facility replaced any mercury containing products? (Example: cleaning supplies, pharmaceuticals)	33	21	18
8. Do you have a "mercury free" purchasing policy?	24	42	4
9. Do you have a dental clinic?	10	67	0
10. Do you educate/train employees about mercury and its effects?	26	50	2
11. Do you have a recycling program? If so what kinds of things do you recycle? Aluminum cans 29 Cardboard 27 X-ray film 15 Shred paper 15 Paper 12 Batteries 12 Mercury 1 Green Star Policy – 2	38	39	
12. Where dispose of mercury? - In red bag - Trash as hazardous waste - Licensed universal waste hauler - Not sure	9 16 39 6		

For more information contact:

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